

## Omagh Motor Club Committee Member Profile – Alistair McKane

I grew up in Dungannon, and joined Dungannon Motor Club around 1966/1967. I started Marshalling on events for Dungannon Motor Club and also on the Circuit of Ireland. I competed as a navigator on Night Navigation Rallies around 1969/1970.

I went to QUB to study Geography in October 1969 and was elected as “Fresher Rep” onto QUB Motor Club committee the same month- sponsored by Stanley Meeke - an uncle of Kris. I became Secretary of QUB Motor Club in 1970 for several years and was COC on a variety of events – including a number of closed and restricted status navigation rallies such as QUBMC Winter Rally 1971 and 1972 ( the latter cancelled due to either the security situation or because of Foot and Mouth- can’t remember which. Remember them? Start at 9pm, run all night with 1 or 2 fuel halts, and finish for breakfast after 200+ Miles. Selectives timed to a second on open public roads? How things have changed)

I graduated in 1973 and moved to Omagh to work for the Ministry of Development as a Planning Officer. I had some contact with OMC and spectated and marshalled during the following year before I returned to QUB to start a 2 year post grad Diploma in Town and Country Planning.

During this time I had met Margaret, we married and I returned to Omagh in 1976 as a twosome, joining Omagh Motor Club and marshalling and timekeeping on OMC and other local club events such as Donegal (including timekeeping on the international), Monaghan and Enniskillen.

I became secretary of the club in 1980 for an 11 year stretch during which the timekeeping / marshalling continued - competed in various economy runs and was part of the winning OMC team in the N.I.Charles Hurst Road Safety Quiz, along with Margaret, Ken McDevitte, and Clive Brandon in 1981. The toughest part of being secretary at this time was arranging the annual Dinner Dance in the Royal Arms Hotel because all the trophies for the year were awarded at the event. Therefore, January was a nightmare of purchasing, engraving and organising the presentation not to mention the venue, band etc. The only thing that didn’t change was the menu - Ashley Armstrong’s pork.

This was also the era of the Dublin Weekends - social trips organised in an attempt to drain the cellars of a variety of Dublin Hotels - although one all-night session in the foyer of the Royal Dublin did prevent it from burning down when we discovered a kitchen fire around 5a.m.

I was Event Secretary for a number of events – can’t remember the details now!

In 1990, my job changed and I became responsible for an IFI/DOE funded regeneration programme for Tyrone and Fermanagh. This involved 14 hour days with meetings with community groups 4 nights a week. It was impossible to continue to hold a position in the club, so I stood down for the duration until I finally retired in 2012, at which time I re-joined the committee. However my involvement in marshalling continued, albeit at a lower level.

It was during this period that I became interested in and involved in rural regeneration projects in Northern Sweden, and through this, got to know a lot of Swedish friends. As we were spending most summers in Sweden with a campervan, we eventually bought a house there in 2003 and since then have spent between 1/4 and 1/3 of each year there.

Having spent the 1980's touring in a caravan all over Western Europe, and the 1990's doing likewise in a campervan, we now concentrated on our local area of Dalarna Province and a different type of motorsport. – classic car rallies, drag racing and of course Rally Sweden and the Midnight Sun Rally . Classic Events in Sweden are dominated ( almost 90%) by American Cars, and we acquired our own here in Ireland- a 1976 Chrysler Cordoba - a 6.5 litre monster bought in 1994 and a 4.7 litre 1967 Mustang bought in 1998. We still have the Mustang, although the Cordoba made way for a 1973 MGB GT in 2010 to allow us to more easily trailer a classic to Sweden for the summer events. We still have the MG as well.



Our two sons. Michael (born 1979) and Jonathan (born 1984) seem to have inherited the car DNA and have spent their lives, initially as unpaid and overworked assistant timekeepers /officials/ gofors at various events, before graduating to competition in England in 12 car rallies competing in a SAAB 900 ( Michael driving, Jonathan navigating). This continued until Jonathan moved to Aberdeen and Michael remained in Welwyn Garden City so logistics meant that joint participation had to end. However the car DNA won out and Jonathan still has a SAAB 900 Aero and Michael a stable including a 1961 Rover, a 1980's Mini, a 1953 Mercedes and a Citroen Acadiene Van which he converted to a mini camper.

And a new generation with car DNA has emerged – Thomas (6) now has a home-built electric go-kart -----

